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Atari Online News, Etc.
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A-ONE #1433 08/24/12

~ 70% of Obama Twits Fake ~ People Are Talking! ~ Washable Keyboard!
~ India Twitter Backlash ~ Russian Court Hacked! ~ Kinect Price Drops!
~ Siemen Security Flaw? ~ Microsoft Revamps Logo ~ Fake Followers High!

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-* Facebook Co-founder Sells 450,000 Shares! *-

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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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I’m waiting for the day when we can all wake up one morning, pick up the newspaper or turn on the television, and see only "good" news for a change. Just once, is that too much to ask?

Typically, our week of vacation is rapidly coming to an end. It’s been a busy week trying to get some things done when we might otherwise not find the time. But, we did manage to get in some rest between various tasks.

So, I’m planning to get in some more relaxation while getting a few more routine chores done. Didn’t think about any mind-boggling topics to talk about this week; we’ve heard enough negativity anyway. At least we don’t have to worry about the hurricane that’s brewingoff of the southern tip of the States. If all goes as advertised, it will blow out to sea well south of us some time next week. Well okay, maybe a little bit of "good" news for next week!

Until next time...

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Kinect for Xbox 360 Price Drops!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""""   RIP Nintendo Power: Magazine Shutting Down!
                                     Angry Birds Space, Starring Curiosity!
                                     And more!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Kinect for Xbox 360 Price Drops by $40

If you've been holding off on buying a Kinect sensor until Microsoft dropped its price, that time has come. Originally introduced at $149.99 on November 4, 2010, the motion-sensing peripheral has officially dropped in price to $109.99 effective immediately. Retailers such as Amazon are already honoring the new asking price.

The cost of entry will get you the sophisticated add-on along with a copy of Kinect Adventures, a collection of minigames meant to show off the Kinect's capabilities. Most brand-new Kinect games run $49.99, but you can get a number of great Kinect titles including Child of Eden and Dance Central for less than $20. There are currently 12 Kinect-compatible games available on Xbox Live Arcade.

If you're looking for something else to do with your Kinect than play games and you're of a technical mind why not see if you can add to the impressive work done by these hardware hackers to transform Microsoft's peripheral into a remote cat-petting robot and more? Of course, Kinect is being used for some serious applications, too, like helping kids with autism.

RIP Nintendo Power: Magazine Shutting Down After 24 Years

It looks like Nintendo Power - one of the longest-running video game publications - is shutting down.

For more than 23 years the publication has offered monthly coverage of the Nintendo gaming ecosystem. In 2007, Nintendo stopped publishing the magazine and shifted responsibilities to Future Publishing.

As first reported by Ars Technica, the venerable brand is preparing to shut down after Nintendo and Future decided not to renew a publishing contract.

According to Ars Technica's source, Nintendo seemed uninterested in taking over publication of the magazine themselves or in creating more digital initiatives to prolong the health of the brand.

Nintendo Power editors initially tweeted what looked to be confirmation of the magazine's demise but those tweets have now been removed. Writers at Nintendo Power are reportedly being transitioned to other Future publications.

Nintendo Power is just the latest video game magazine to go out of print. In late 2011, GamePro ceased publication after 23 years. In 2009, Ziff Davis stopped publishing Electronic Gaming Monthly - although the magazine was revived by a different publisher in 2010.

If you were anything like me, large portions of your childhood were spent buried in the pages of the original Nintendo Power. I would spend hours pouring over each issue, reading about upcoming games and existing favorites. The first hundred issues or so are tucked away in my parent's basement, living on as mementos of childhood I'm still unready to discard.

The first issue of Nintendo Power was released in the summer of 1988, and featured Super Mario Bros. 2 on the cover.

Inside OnLive: Employees Fired During All-hands Meeting, Acquisition Could Be Imminent

Widely spread but still unconfirmed reports of mass layoffs at cloud-based gaming company OnLive are reportedly tied to an acquisition of the three-year-old company by an unknown third party.

According to a report from alleged former OnLive employees, at least 50 percent of the company's staff was let go this morning, reports Engadget. Staffers were reportedly told that OnLive's new owner had already sent offer letters to remaining employees. An ex-OnLive staffer estimates that OnLive going forward could exist as a skeleton crew of a little as 20 employees.

OnLive employee profiles on LinkedIn have been dropping throughout the day, with at least 20 members updating their status as former employees of the company.

IDG News correspondent Martyn Williams has been stationed outside OnLive headquarters today, reporting that employees have been seen moving out of the company's offices.

A report on TechCrunch says that OnLive's supposed buyer acquired the company for its intellectual property, branding, and patents. The firings were also reportedly a move designed to "reduce the company's liability."

GamePolitics offers an ex-employee's rundown of the all-hands meeting lead by OnLive founder and CEO Steve Perlman who reportedly told employees that the company was entering a "variation of bankruptcy which is valid in California" and that "the company as of this moment does not exist," "portions of it are being acquired by a brand new entity" and "all of your options are gone."

That same anonymous ex-employee tells GamePolitics "money was getting tight."

"There were signs of it because budgets had been slashed and there were very long holds on getting business terms signed off on... but the expectation was 'oh Steve's going to go and get another round of funding.' There were a few people hoping for the acquisition because that's really the end game, but if you were reasonably smart you knew that the ikelihood of that was pretty low."

OnLive reps have not yet provided official clarification on the matter of rumored layoffs, only telling Polygon "the OnLive service is not shutting down."

Update: According to our own Sean Hollister, who is at the OnLive offices now, a steady stream of employees is emerging from the building, many carrying single white sheets of paper. We haven't been able to talk to any of them, but Martyn Williams says that OnLive has promised a statement soon.

Update 2: Sean Hollister has been told by a company spokesperson to come inside the OnLive building to wait for a statement. Meanwhile, employees have ceased exiting through the main entrance, and our now being instructed to venture out through the garage instead.

Angry Birds Space Blasts Off with New Levels on Mars, Starring Curiosity

Angry Birds Space has had a relationship with NASA since the game's early days, but its latest level takes the connection to an exciting new place. You can now see your favorite feathered ballistics teaming up with NASA to rescue the Curiosity rover from the clutches of those dastardly pigs.

Yes, version 1.3 of Angry Birds Space is set on Mars, with 20 new levels and two antenna egg levels. There are three hidden rovers and landers for you to find, and they'll unlock bonus information about NASA missions. Expect to see volcanoes and explosive asteroids as well. The new version is a free update, and if you haven't experienced the Angry Birds phenomenon yet, the game is available for any device through the Apple App store (iPhone or iPad) and through Google Play for Android devices.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

South Korean Court Rules Samsung Didn't Copy iPhone

South Korea's Samsung won a home court ruling in its global smartphone battle against Apple on Friday when judges in Seoul said the company didn't copy the look and feel of the U.S. company's iPhone, and that Apple infringed on Samsung's wireless technology.

However, in a split decision on patents, the panel also said Samsung violated Apple technology behind the bounce-back feature when scrolling on touch screens, and ordered both sides to pay limited damages.

The Seoul Central District Court ruling called for a partial ban on sales of products including iPads and smartphones from both companies, though the verdict did not affect the latest-generation phones Apple's iPhone 4S or Samsung's Galaxy S3.

The ruling affects only the South Korean market, and is part of a larger, epic struggle over patents and innovation unfolding in nine countries. The biggest stakes are in the U.S., where Apple is suing Samsung for $2.5 billion over allegations it has created illegal knockoffs of iPhones and iPads.

The Seoul ruling was a rare victory for Samsung in its arguments that Apple has infringed on its wireless technology patents, which previously have been shot down by courts in Europe where judges have ruled that they are part of industry standards that must be licensed under fair terms to competitors.

"This is basically Samsung's victory on its home territory," said patent

attorney Jeong Woo-sung. "Out of nine countries, Samsung got the ruling that it wanted for the first time in South Korea."

The ruling ordered Apple to remove the iPhone 3GS, iPhone 4, iPad 1 and iPad 2 from store shelves in South Korea, saying that the products infringed on two of Samsung's five disputed patents, including those for telecommunications technology.

The court also denied Apple's claim that Samsung had illegally copied its design, ruling that big rectangular screens in cases with rounded corners had existed in products before the iPhone and iPad.

"It is not possible to assert that these two designs are similar based only on the similarity of those features," the court said in a ruling issued in Korean that was translated into English by The Associated Press. It also said individual icons in the Samsung products do not appear similar to the icons Apple used in the iPhone.

But the court ruled that Suwon, South Korea-based Samsung had infringed on one of Apple's patents on the feature that causes a screen to bounce back when a user scrolls to an end image. The court banned sales of Samsung products using the technology, including the Galaxy S2, in South Korea.

Court spokesman Kim Mun-sung said the court's ruling was to take effect immediately, although companies often request that sanctions be suspended while they evaluate their legal options.

Nam Ki-yung, a spokesman for Samsung, said the company welcomed the ruling.

"Today's ruling also affirmed our position that one single company cannot monopolize generic design features," he said.

Apple did not respond to multiple calls seeking comment.

The court also ordered each company to pay monetary compensation to its competitor. Samsung must pay Apple 25 million won ($22,000) while Apple must pay its rival 40 million won.

South Korea is not a big market for Apple, and the ruling is not likely to have a big impact on jury deliberations in the U.S.

However, some industry watchers expressed concern over the South Korean ruling to protect industry standard patents. They say the decision could invite a trade war by giving Samsung and fellow South Korean company LG both industry standard patent holders more room to block rivals' entrance into South Korea if they don't agree to licensing terms.

"It would mean that foreign companies would either have to bow to Samsung's and LG's demands ... or stop selling in Korea," said Florian Mueller, a patent expert in Munich, Germany who has been closely following the case.

Courts in Europe, including Netherlands, France, Italy and Germany have rejected similar claims by Samsung that Apple violated its wireless patents, with judges arguing that the patents have become part of industry standards. Standard-essential patents are a crucial technology for new players to make products compatible with the rest of the market and must be licensed under fair and reasonable terms.

Europe's anti-trust regulator launched an investigation earlier this year

into whether Samsung was failing to license those patents under fair and reasonable terms.

In Friday’s ruling, the South Korean court said Samsung did not abuse its market power as an industry standard patent holder.

Apple filed suit against Samsung in San Jose, California, in April 2011, alleging that some of the South Korean company’s smartphones and computer tablets are illegal knockoffs of Apple’s iPhone and iPad. Samsung denies the allegations and argues that all companies in the cutthroat phone industry mimic each other’s successes without crossing the legal line.

Cupertino, California-based Apple is suing Samsung for $2.5 billion and demanding that the court pull its most popular smartphones and computer tablets from the U.S. market, making the case one of the biggest technology disputes in history.

Jury deliberations in San Jose began Wednesday after three weeks of testimony. The case went to the jury after last-minute talks between the companies’ chief executives failed to resolve the dispute.

Shortly after Apple filed its suit in the U.S., Samsung filed a complaint in South Korea against Apple for allegedly breaching its telecommunications patents.

The battle is all the more complex as Apple and Samsung are not only competitors in the fast-growing global market for smartphones and tablet computers, but also have a close business relationship.

"This is going to go on and on and on," said Barney Loehnis, head of mobile for Asia at public relations firm Ogilvy. "This will never change because the sorts of patents that they’re fighting over are such a fundamental essence of using these devices that they’re always going to be leapfrogging one over the other."

Samsung, the world’s biggest manufacturer of memory chips and liquid crystal displays, supplies some of the key components that go into Apple products, including mobile chips that work as a brain of the iPhone and the iPad.

The South Korean firm overtook Apple in less than three years in smartphone markets. In the second quarter of this year, Samsung sold 50.2 million units of smartphones, nearly twice as much as Apple’s 26 million units, according to IDC.

Google ’Failed To Comply’ with Order To Disclose Paid Journalists and Bloggers

Earlier this month Judge William Alsup ordered Oracle and Google to disclose any journalists or bloggers either has paid that could have commented on the Oracle v. Google case. Both parties responded last week but Judge Alsup didn’t think Google was completely forthright, and has asked the company to try again by the end of the week.

In a order filed today, Alsup flatly states that "Google has failed to comply" with his original request. Google had said in its initial response that the company hadn’t "paid an author, journalist, commentator or blogger

to report or comment on any issues in this case" a definition that Alsup clearly felt was much too narrow. In his order, he writes that "the order was designed to bring to light authors whose statements about the issues in the case might have been influenced by the receipt of money from Google or Oracle," pointing out that an individual doing consulting work for one of the companies might then be influenced to comment on the Oracle v. Google trial in a particular light.

Oracle admitted in its response that it retains FOSS Patents blogger Florian Mueller as a consultant.

Google will have until noon this Friday, August 24th, to file a new list. While the company needn't include writers that have simply received ad revenue, he does want the company to list "consultants, contractors, vendors, or employees."

"Please simply do your best but the impossible is not required," Alsup writes in his order. "Oracle managed to do it."

U.S. Looks Into Claims of Security Flaw in Siemens Gear

The U.S. government is looking into claims by a cyber security researcher that flaws in software for specialized networking equipment from Siemens could enable hackers to attack power plants and other critical systems.

Justin W. Clarke, an expert in securing industrial control systems, disclosed at a conference in Los Angeles on Friday that he had figured out a way to spy on traffic moving through networking equipment manufactured by Siemens' RuggedCom division.

The Department of Homeland Security said in an alert released on Tuesday that it had asked RuggedCom to confirm the vulnerability that Clarke, a 30-year-old security expert who has long worked in the electric utility field, had identified and identify steps to mitigate its impact.

RuggedCom, a Canadian subsidiary of Siemens that sells networking equipment for use in harsh environments such as areas with extreme weather, said it was investigating Clarke's findings, but declined to elaborate.

Clarke said that the discovery of the flaw is disturbing because hackers who can spy on communications of infrastructure operators could gain credentials to access computer systems that control power plants and other critical systems.

"If you can get to the inside, there is almost no authentication, there are almost no checks and balances to stop you," Clarke said.

This is the second bug that Clarke, a high school graduate who never attended college, has discovered in products from RuggedCom, which are widely used by power companies that rely on its equipment to support communications to remote power stations.

In May, RuggedCom released an update to its Rugged Operating System software after Clarke discovered that it had a previously undisclosed "back door" account that could give hackers remote access to the equipment with an easily obtained password.

The Department of Homeland Security's Industrial Control Systems Cyber Emergency Response Team, which is known as ICS-CERT, said in its advisory on Tuesday that government analysts were working with RuggedCom and Clarke to figure out how to best mitigate any risks from the newly identified vulnerability.

Clarke said that problem will be tough to fix because all Rugged Operating System software uses a single software "key" to decode traffic that is encrypted as it travels across the network.

He told Reuters that it is possible to extract that "key" from any piece of RuggedCom's Rugged Operating System software.

Clarke obtained RuggedCom's products by purchasing them through eBay.

He conducted the original research in his spare time with equipment spread out on the bed of his downtown San Francisco apartment. Earlier this year, he was hired by Cylance, a firm that specializes on securing critical infrastructure and was founded by Stuart McClure, the former chief technology officer of Intel Corp's McAfee security division.

Marcus Carey, a researcher with Boston-based security firm Rapid7, said potential attackers might exploit the bug discovered by Clarke to disable communications networks as one element of a broader attack.

"It's a big deal," said Carey, who previously helped defend military networks as a member of the U.S. Navy Cryptologic Security Group. "Since communications between these devices is critical, you can totally incapacitate an organization that requires the network."

So far there have been no publicly reported cases of cyber attacks that have caused damage on U.S. critical infrastructure.

The Stuxnet virus was used to cripple Iran's nuclear program in 2010, causing physical damage to a uranium enrichment facility in that nation. Researchers recently found pieces of another virus known as Flame that they believe been used to destroy data in facilities in Iran.

The report on the RuggedCom vulnerability is among 90 released so far this year by ICS-CERT about possible risks to critical infrastructure operators. That is up from about 60 in the same period a year earlier, according to data published on the agency's website.

"DHS works closely with public and private sector partners to develop trusted relationships and help asset owners and operators establish policies and controls that prevent incidents," said DHS spokesman Peter Boogaard. "The number of incidents reported to DHS's ICS-CERT has increased, partly due to this increased communication."

Website of Court That Sentenced Pussy Riot Hacked

Russian hackers on Tuesday attacked the website of the Moscow court where three members of the Pussy Riot punk band were tried and sentenced to two years in prison for an irreverent protest.

The Russian offshoot of the loose-knit movement known as Anonymous tweeted

that it had taken down the website of the Khamovniki district court.

According to search engines' cached pages, the hackers posted Pussy Riot's latest song ridiculing President Vladimir Putin on the website, along with calls to release the band members. One headline read: "Putin's thieving gang is robbing our country! Wake up, comrades!"

The website hamovnichesky.msk.sudrf.ru was not available later Tuesday.

Court spokeswoman Darya Lyakh said the Supreme Court would demand the hackers face criminal charges.

The three female band members were punished for a provocative stunt in February at Moscow's main cathedral in which they asked the Virgin Mary to deliver Russia from Putin, who was elected to a third term two weeks later.

Their trial caused an international furor, and small but raucous protests were held around the world Friday when the women were convicted and sentenced. Celebrities including Paul McCartney, Madonna and Bjork have called for them to be freed.

One of the activists said they were treated roughly by the special forces officers who escorted them back to jail after the sentencing. The women were transported in a bus full of burly officers, and two more buses carrying additional special forces troops drove along with them, Maria Alekhina wrote.

"To throw such resources at three women can mean only one thing: fear," Alekhina said in a handwritten note posted on the Internet by her lawyer. "And it's amazing to see the sweep of such fear."

The punishment of Pussy Riot has highlighted the crackdown on the opposition since Putin returned to the presidency in May.

India Faces Twitter Backlash over Internet Clampdown

The Indian government faced an angry backlash from Twitter users on Thursday after ordering Internet service providers to block about 20 accounts that officials said had spread scare-mongering material that threatened national security.

The backlash came as New Delhi turned up the heat on Twitter, threatening "appropriate and suitable action" if it failed to remove the accounts as soon as possible. Several Indian newspapers said this could mean a total ban on access to Twitter in India but government officials would not confirm to Reuters that such a drastic step was being considered.

Twitter, which does not have an office in India, declined to comment. There are about 16 million Twitter users in the South Asian country.

The government has found itself on the defensive this week over what critics see as a clumsy clampdown on social media websites - including Google, YouTube and Facebook - that has raised questions about freedom of information in the world's largest democracy.

"Dear GOI (Government of India), Keep your Hands Off My Internet. Else

face protest" tweeted one user, @Old_Monk60.

India blocked access to more than 300 Web pages after threatening mobile phone text messages and doctored website images fuelled rumors that Muslims, a large minority in the predominantly Hindu country, were planning revenge attacks for violence in the northeastern state of Assam, where 80 people have been killed and 300,000 have been displaced since July.

Fearing for their lives, tens of thousands of migrants fled Mumbai, Bangalore and other cities last week. The exodus highlighted underlying tensions in a country with a history of ethnic and religious violence.

According to documents obtained by Reuters, the government has targeted Indian journalists, Britain’s Daily Telegraph, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Al Jazeera television in its clampdown on Internet postings it says could inflame communal tensions.

The directives to Internet service providers listed dozens of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter pages. A random sampling of the YouTube postings revealed genuine news footage spliced together with fear-mongering propaganda.

In Washington, the State Department urged New Delhi to balance its security push with respect for basic rights including freedom of speech.

"As the Indian government seeks to preserve security we are urging them also to take into account the importance of freedom of expression in the online world," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said.

Nuland said Washington stood ready to consult with U.S. companies as they discuss the issue with the Indian government, although it was not now directly involved.

"The unique characteristics of the online environment need to be respected even as they work through whether there are things these companies can do to help calm the environment," she said.

The government says Google and Facebook have largely cooperated while Twitter has been much slower to respond.

"Every company, whether it’s an entertainment company, or a construction company, or a social media company, has to operate within the laws of the given country," said Sachin Pilot, minister of state in the Ministry of Communications.

Twitter has been instructed to remove 28 pages containing "objectionable content," an interior ministry official said.

"If they do not remove the pages, the Indian government will take appropriate and suitable action," he added.

The government has ordered Internet service providers to block the Twitter accounts of veteran journalist Kanchan Gupta and television anchor Shiv Aroor. Some appeared to have begun complying with the order on Thursday as Twitter users reported difficulties in accessing their pages.

"It is a political decision, because of my criticism of the government," said Gupta, who was an official in the previous government led by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party.

The government’s actions triggered a storm of criticism from Twitter users, with the hashtags #Emergency2012 and #GOIBlocks among the top trending topics on Twitter in India on Thursday. Some compared the situation with the state of emergency imposed by the government in 1975, when some journalists were jailed.

The Centre for Internet and Society, which analyzed the 300 banning orders, found that they contained "numerous mistakes and inconsistencies." Some of the banned websites belonged to people trying to debunk the rumors, for example, it said.

"This isn’t about political censorship. This is about the government not knowing how to do online regulation properly," said CIS program manager Pranesh Prakash.

India’s parliament last year passed a law that obliges Internet companies to remove a range of objectionable content when requested to do so, a move criticized at the time by rights groups and social media companies.

Facebook Co-founder Sells 450,000 Shares

Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz shed 450,000 shares of Facebook in the past few days for proceeds of about $9 million a tiny chunk of his total stake.

Moskovitz was Mark Zuckerberg’s Harvard roommate when they founded Facebook in 2004. He disclosed in a regulatory filing late Tuesday that he sold the shares on Friday, Monday and Tuesday in blocks of 150,000.

He sold the shares for $18.79 to $20.08 each for proceeds of nearly $9 million.

Moskovitz, 28, left Facebook in 2008 and started Asana, whose software helps manage projects.

He did not sell any stock in Facebook’s IPO. He still owns more than 133 million shares. Based on the filing, he could sell 7 million more shares he converted from Class B to Class A.

Microsoft Accepts Orders for Upgrade to Windows 8

The window to upgrade to the next version of Microsoft’s computer operating system is now open.

Microsoft Corp. began accepting orders for Windows 8 this week. The new operating system won’t be delivered until Oct. 26, however.

People who own a personal computer running earlier versions of Windows can buy the revamped system for $14.99 to $39.99.

The lower price is being offered to PC owners who have bought a machine powered by Windows 7 since June 2. Everyone else with a Windows-based computer will have to pay the higher price if they want to upgrade.

The chance to upgrade at these prices expires Jan. 31.

Microsoft designed Windows 8 so it can power both traditional PCs and tablet computers in response to the iPad’s popularity.

Windows 8 Is Watching You

Playing around with the manufacturers’ version of the not-yet-widely released Windows 8, programmer (and hacker) Nadim Kobeissi discovered that the operating system "tells Microsoft about everything you install" and does that "not very securely." Basically, the new Windows has this program called SmartScreen that’s designed to protect users but instead gives Windows (and possible hackers) access to a lot of information. Here’s the crux of the issue from Kobeissi’s blog:

> Windows 8 will, by default, inform Microsoft of every app downloaded and installed by every user. This puts Microsoft in a compromising, omniscient situation where they are capable of retaining information on the application usage of all Windows 8 users, thus posing a serious privacy concern. The user is not informed of this while installing and setting up Windows 8, even though they are given the option to disable SmartScreen (which is enabled by default.)
>
> Windows 8 appears to send this information to Microsoft to a server that relies on Certificate Authorities for authentication and supports an outdated and insecure method of encrypted communication. It is possible that these insecurities could allow a malicious third party to target a Windows 8 user and learn which applications they are using. This allows them to profile the user and decide how to best exploit their personal selection of applications and their computing habits.

As commenters on his post note, Apple also knows this kind of information when we download apps in its marketplace. That doesn’t make Microsoft’s move right, though. And from the sound of it, it looks like Microsoft knows more detailed information than what Apple does. The other difference between Apple and Microsoft is that Microsoft can still fix some of the security issues outlined by Kobeissi, as he only played around with the manufacturers’ version. The consumer version is due for release on October 26.

Logitech Releases New Water-friendly, Washable Keyboard

Logitech’s new keyboard is a boon for the clean freaks it can be washed! The K310 keyboard can be submerged in up to 11 inches of water and has drainage holes for speedy drying. The keys are labeled with laser printing and UV coating, so that the marks won’t rub away. The only caution is that the keyboard uses a USB cable to connect to computers, so you’ll need to make sure that port stays totally dry. Logitech’s K310 is expected to go on sale in the U.S. later this month and retail for $40.

If this news makes you long to scrub down your entire work station, we have some tips. Check out our guides for cleaning your monitor and your mouse. And be sure to conduct regular maintenance and upkeep to make sure the inside of your computer is as beautiful as the outside.

Microsoft Revamps Logo for 1st Time in 25 Years

Microsoft’s corporate logo has a new look, setting the stage for a wave of products designed to cast the world’s largest software maker in a new light.

The makeover unveiled Thursday marks the first time that Microsoft Corp. has revamped its logo since February 1987. The Internet was barely around then, and cellphones were considered a luxury.

At the time, Microsoft was putting the finishing touches on the second version of its Windows operating system. Two of Microsoft’s biggest nemeses Google Inc. co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin were just 13 years old. And Apple Inc. co-founder Steve Jobs was just in the second year of an 11-year exile from the company that went on to invent the iPod, iPhone and iPad after he returned.

By revamping its logo, Microsoft is trying to signal that it has changed its thinking and its products to cater to people who are interacting with technology much differently than just a decade ago, let alone a quarter century.

Now, more computing tasks are being done on touch-based devices such as smartphones and tablets instead of personal computers tethered to keyboards and mice. Many software applications are now supplied over high-speed Internet connections for a monthly fee instead of being installed on individual computers.

Microsoft believes a radical change to Windows will ensure that the company survives the technological upheaval. Windows 8, due to hit the market Oct. 26, displays software applications in a mosaic of tiles and has been engineered so it works on both touch-based tablets and traditional PCs. The company also is releasing its own Windows 8-powered tablet to compete against the iPad, accompanied by a new version of Office applications tailored for such devices. There also will be a Windows 8 operating system for smartphones.

The new logo ushers in "one of the most significant waves of product launches in Microsoft’s history," Jeff Hansen, the company’s general manager of brand strategy, wrote in a blog post Thursday.

The redesign features the Microsoft name in a lighter, straight font called Segoe to replace the italic bold type used in the old standby. The new logo also includes the familiar red, blue, yellow and green colors used in the flag on Microsoft’s Windows operating system, but the colors will be in a square box instead of the curvy template that has been in place for years. Those color boxes evoke the tiles that will be central to Windows 8.

"The ways people experience our products are our most important ’brand impressions,’" Hansen wrote. "That’s why the new Microsoft logo takes its inspiration from our product design principles while drawing upon the heritage of our brand values, fonts and colors."

The new logo made its debut Thursday on Microsoft’s websites, as well as three of its stores in Boston, Bellevue, Wash. and Seattle, which is located near the company’s Redmond, Wash., headquarters.

This is Microsoft’s fifth logo since Bill Gates and Paul Allen founded the company 37 years ago. When it last changed its logo in 1987, Microsoft had been a publicly traded company for less than a year and boasted a market value of about $2 billion. It peaked at more than $600 million in 1999. Now, Microsoft’s market value stands at $254 billion less than half of Apple’s market value of $623 billion.

How Police Tracked Down Steve Jobs’s Stolen iPads

The digital breadcrumbs left behind when people use Internet-connected gadgets are what led California investigators to recover iMacs, iPads and other items stolen from the home of the late Apple CEO Steve Jobs.

Based on the police report, obtained by the IDG News Service, here s how they did it.

The burglary took place while the Jobs family home, in a leafy and quiet area of Palo Alto, was being renovated and was unoccupied. Sometime between the construction crew leaving the site at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, July 17, and arriving just before 8:00 a.m. the next morning, someone entered the house and stole several personal effects and Apple gadgets.

Within several days, the Palo Alto Police Department had enlisted the help of the Rapid Enforcement Allied Computer Team, a San Jose-based organization formed by local, state and federal law enforcement agencies that specializes in computer-related crimes. Local police wanted assistance tracking down the Apple computers and iPads that were reported stolen from the house.

The REACT team reached out to Apple s own investigators, who had access to the company s computer systems, and supplied them with a list of serial numbers of stolen devices. Apple was quickly able to determine that one of the stolen iPads had connected with Apple s servers soon after the burglary.

The iPad was trying to reinstall its operating system and was recorded connecting from an AT&T U-verse Internet IP address from 7:22 a.m. to 7:31 a.m. on July 18, the morning after the house was broken into and minutes before the returning construction workers would discover the break-in.

Upon searching logs for the IP address, Apple investigators discovered a different iPad had connected from the same address at 8:10 a.m. on July 17, before the burglary took place, and again at 1:56 p.m. on July 20, after the break-in was reported to police. That iPad wasn t suspected stolen, but the iTunes account information gave investigators a lead.

Tied with information from AT&T U-verse about the Internet connection, investigators were led to an address in Alameda, on the east side of San Francisco Bay. At that address Kariem McFarlin, the suspect in the case, was paying for AT&T Internet service, according to investigators.

While police were building their case there was more activity on the stolen devices.

Over a five-day period, Apple investigators recorded activity on McFarlin s iTunes account linked to the iPad that originally connected to restore its operating system, a second iPad stolen from the Jobs home and

an iMac computer that was also missing, according to police. One of the iPads later connected from a Comcast Internet connection in Alameda using a different iTunes account.

Investigators say they searched McFarlin s Facebook page and discovered their suspect and the owner of this new iTunes account were friends.

Before investigators made their move there was one final check that had to be made. They traveled to the Alameda address where McFarlin lived and swept the immediate area for Wi-Fi signals.

Police wanted to determine whether there was an open Wi-Fi network that perhaps was being used without the owners permission. If the AT&T Internet address was tied to an unsecured connection, it could complicate the case because anyone could have used it. Finding only secured Wi-Fi signals, investigators could argue it was being used by the person paying the bill or those with permission.

On August 2 police entered McFarlin s apartment and discovered one of the stolen iMac computers on his kitchen table, according to the police report. The other iPads were recovered from people associated with McFarlin, the police say.

To get rid of stolen jewelry, McFarlin told police, he had Googled selling jewelry and found a dealer in Pennsylvania. Police say they found email messages in McFarlin s phone indicating the sale and were able to recover the stolen jewelry by contacting the broker.

In a subsequent interview with McFarlin, police say he admitted breaking into the home by climbing over the builders scaffolding and finding a spare key for the house in the garage. He said he stole two iMacs, three iPads, three iPods, one Apple TV, a diamond necklace and earrings, and several other items.

In explaining his actions, investigators say McFarlin said he had money problems and had taken to breaking into houses. He wrote a single page letter of apology admitting he had burglarized Steve Jobs house and stolen property, but had done so because he was desperate.

McFarlin is due in court on Monday.

Facebook Has 44% Fake Followers; Twitter Has 33%

Some 44% of people who follow the @Facebook account on Twitter are - well, actually, they aren’t, according to an entertaining new app that checks out how many fakers you have in your following.

The main @Twitter account doesn’t fare that much better; exactly a third of its followers are very likely spam bots.

Now there’s an online tool, created by London-based social media management firm StatusPeople, that sifts a sample of those who follow your Twitter handle for fake and inactive followers.

Defining a fake or spam account isn’t an exact science, but here’s the guiding principle for StatusPeople’s algorithm: "Spam accounts tend to have few or no followers and few or no tweets," the company writes. "But

they tend to follow a lot of other accounts."

Earlier Wednesday, Business Insider used the tool to determine which of the most-followed social media accounts had the most fake followers. Twitter in Spanish handily beat all comers with 61% spam accounts.

The figures are slightly different in BI's test, since the StatusPeople tool is constantly refining its sample for each account. But it is clear that large chunks of the following for major corporate accounts are fake. @Google and @YouTube, for example, are both in the 33% fake range.

Since the makers of spam accounts are likely to follow big names in their bid to make the account look legitimate, the size of a company's fake following may mean nothing more than how widely known that firm's brand is. At least, we're sure that's how Facebook would spin it.

Obama Has 13 Million Fake Twitter Followers

President Obama has nearly 19 million Twitter followers, but 70%, or approximately 13 million of them, are fake, according to a new analysis.

Mitt Romney's Twitter account, meanwhile, has less than 900,000 followers, but only 15% of them, or about 135,000, are fakes.

The numbers come from Fake Follower Check, a tool from social media firm StatusPeople that analyzes any Twitter account's followers and checks for telltale signs of fake followers.

"Fake accounts tend to follow a lot of people but have few followers," Rob Waller, founder of StatusPeople, told the New York Times in a story about buying and selling Twitter followers. We then combine that with a few other metrics to confirm the account is fake."

Analysis of other popular Twitter accounts done using StatusPeople's tools seems to indicate that the more popular a Twitter account is, the more likely it is that the account will have fake followers - possibly thanks to the work of Internet spammers.

Fake Twitter followers can be purchased on dozens of websites offering the service for as little as $0.01 per follower. They are sometimes bought by Twitter account managers to give the illusion that a particular brand has more social reach than it actually does.

A sudden spike in Romney's follower count last month caused speculation that someone was buying fake followers for the account. Both the Romney campaign and the Obama campaign have denied buying Twitter followers. Twitter could not be reached for comment on the matter.

Are you surprised that Obama might have so many fake followers?

Where Do Twitter F-Bombs Come From? Heat Map Shows Rudest Places

A new project called "Twitter Heatmap" shows where the U.S.'s most polite and rudest Twitter users are, by mapping Good Mornings and F*** Yous.

The team at Vertaline, who created the map, scanned tweets in 462 specific U.S. locations. The phrase "Good Morning" was tracked between June 20 and July 1 and "F*** You" was tracked between July 14 and 24.

You can set the map to show "Good Morning" or "F*** You," and "Absolute" and "Relative" distribution of tweets at a time, as compared to over the whole day.

While the map doesn’t offer any conclusive information about regional Twitter etiquette, playing around with the different settings reveal that the Northeast and Los Angeles are among the country’s rudest regions.

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